

Amendments to the Claims

The claims were amended as follows in the Response filed on March 2, 2004.

1. (Currently amended) A thermosetting composition comprising crosslinked polymer microparticles with a size of between 10 and 200 nm, wherein the microparticles are at least partially soluble, miscible and/or dispersible in the starting thermosetting composition and carry at least one first reactive functional group which can react with at least one reactive functional group carried by at least one reactive component of the thermosetting composition and wherein the thermosetting composition is selected from the group of reactive systems consisting of: epoxy/amine, epoxy/anhydride, isocyanate/amine, isocyanate/alcohol, unsaturated polyesters, vinyl esters, unsaturated polyester and vinyl ester blends, unsaturated polyester/urethane hybrid resins, polyurethane-ureas, reactive dicyclopentadiene resins and reactive polyamides: wherein the microparticles carry at least one functional group which reacts by a polycondensation reaction and at least one second functional group which is an α,β -ethylenic unsaturation which can polymerize by the radical route or by a specific Michael reaction.

2-7. Cancelled.

8. (Original) The composition of Claim 1, wherein the level of reactive crosslinked microparticles lies between 0.5 and 50% by weight with respect to the overall organic thermosetting composition.

9. (Currently amended) The composition of Claim 1, wherein the thermosetting composition is based on epoxy/amine and comprises:

- a) at least one epoxide-comprising compound, having a functionality with regard to epoxy groups of at least two, with an aromatic and/or ~~(cyclo)aliphatic~~ cycloaliphatic structure,
- b) at least one amine compound, with an amine functionality of at least two, with an aromatic and/or ~~(cyclo)aliphatic~~ cycloaliphatic structure,
- c) optionally, a monofunctional epoxide compound carrying a second distinct functional group which can polymerize by the radical route,

- d) 0.5-50% by weight with respect to the total of components a) + b) + c) + d) of the reactive crosslinked microparticles of Claim 1.

10. (Original) The composition as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the reactive crosslinked micro-particles carry at least one epoxy or carboxylic acid or anhydride functional group.

11. (Currently amended) The composition as claimed in Claim 10, wherein said microparticles can be obtained by polymerization starting from:

- i) 10-50 mol% of lauryl and/or tridecyl and/or octadecyl and/or docosyl and/or isobornyl and/or Cardura E 10 (meth)acrylate,
- ii) 10-70 mol% of butyl and/or tert-butyl and/or 2-ethylhexyl and/or 2-(2-ethoxyethoxy)ethyl (meth)acrylate,
- iii) 5-30 mol%:
 - of glycidyl methacrylate and/or of at least one (meth)acrylate carrying at least one epoxide functional group derived from dicyclopentadiene or from vinylnorbornene or from cyclohexene and/or of alkoxylated glycidyl ether (meth)acrylates, in order to obtain at least one epoxy functional group,
 - of (meth)acrylic acid and/or of maleic or fumaric or itaconic acid and/or of maleic anhydride, in order to obtain at least one carboxylic acid or anhydride functional group, and
- iv) 2-10 mol% of hexanediol and/or neopentyl glycol and/or trimethylolpropane di(meth)acrylate,

with the proportions of the components being selected so that the sum of the molar percentages of i)+ii)+iii)+iv) is equal to 100

wherein during a second stage, the starting reactive functional groups are partially modified to a second reactive functional group according to:

- the epoxy functional groups: by reaction with (meth)acrylic acid and/or maleic or fumaric or itaconic acid,
- the acid (carboxyl) and/or anhydride functional groups: by reaction with glycidyl methacrylate or vinyl or allyl alcohol or a hydroxyalkyl (meth)acrylate;

12. Canceled.

13. (Original) The composition of Claim 9, wherein the reactive functional groups of the microparticles are carboxylic acid and/or anhydride functional groups in the presence of (meth)acrylate and/or allyl and/or vinyl functional groups.

14. (Original) The composition of Claim 1, wherein the thermosetting composition comprises:

- a) at least one unsaturated polyester and/or at least one unsaturated polyester modified by a poly-isocyanate and/or at least one vinyl ester,
- b) at least one copolymerizable comonomer carrying at least one α,β -ethylenic unsaturation chosen from vinylaromatic and/or (meth)acrylic and/or allyl monomers,
- c) optionally at least one second monomer carrying at least two reactive functional groups, one of which can polymerize by the radical route and the other by a condensation reaction,
- d) 0.5-50% and preferably from 5 to 25% by weight of reactive crosslinked microparticles of Claim 1.

15. (Original) The composition as claimed in Claim 14, wherein said microparticles carry at least one (meth)acrylate or hydrogen maleate functional group.

16. (Original) The composition as claimed in Claim 15, wherein said microparticles can be obtained by a first polymerization stage starting from:

- i) 10-40 mol% of Cardura E10 (meth)acrylate,
- ii) 10-75 mol% of butyl and/or tert-butyl and/or 2-ethylhexyl and/or 2-(2-ethoxyethoxy)ethyl (meth)acrylate and of styrene, with a molar ratio of styrene to (meth)acrylic monomers varying from 0 to 0.2,
- iii) 5-40 mol% of hydroxyethyl (meth)acrylate, maleic anhydride, (meth)acrylic acid or glycidyl methacrylate,
- iv) 2-10 mol% of hexanediol and/or propylene glycol and/or neopentyl glycol and/or trimethylolpropane (meth)acrylate,

with the sum of the molar percentages of all these constituents i)+ii)+iii)+iv) being equal to 100, followed by a second stage of at least partial chemical modification of the starting reactive functional groups according to:

- the starting hydroxyl functional groups to hydrogen maleates by reaction with maleic anhydride and/or to (meth)acrylates by reaction with (meth)acrylic acid,
- the starting epoxy functional groups to (meth)acrylates by reaction with (meth)acrylic acid,
- the acid functional groups to methacrylate by reaction with glycidyl methacrylate,
- the anhydride functional groups to (meth)acrylates and residual acids by reaction with a hydroxyethyl or hydroxypropyl (meth) acrylate or with glycidyl methacrylate.

17. (Original) A coating comprising the composition of Claim 1.

18. (Original) The coating of Claim 17, wherein said coatings are protective coatings for electrical or electronic components, items or devices.

19. (Previously amended) The thermosetting composition of Claim 1 applied to molded items and of items made of composite materials.

20. (Original) A thermoset matrix obtained from the thermosetting composition of Claim 1.

21. (Original) A protective coating, molded item or item made of composite materials obtained from the thermosetting composition of Claim 1.